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Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Teen Wolf (TV)
Relationship:	Derek Hale/Stiles Stilinski
Characters:	Derek Hale/Stiles Stilinski , Stiles Stilinski , Derek Hale , Allison Argent , Scott McCall , Lydia Martin , Isaac Lahey
Additional Tags:	Mute Stiles , Humor , Smut , Oral Sex , Anal Fingering , Anal Sex
Stats:	Published: 2014-08-24 Chapters: 1/1 Words: 10,069

Of Cabbages and Kings

by [geniusalias](#)

Summary

When Stiles loses his voice, Derek loses his mind.

Of Cabbages and Kings

*"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes- and ships- and sealing-wax-
Of cabbages- and kings-
And why the sea is boiling hot-
And whether pigs have wings."*

-Lewis Carroll, The Walrus and the Carpenter

xxx

"We're going to miss the movie." Stiles complained, ducking to dodge the spell cast in his direction.

Scott lunged towards the witch, claws bared, and swiped, but the woman was apparently a master of martial arts as well as black arts. She parried Scott's blow with the heel of her hand, then sent him flying backwards with a kick to the stomach. The stack of crates against the wall smashed as Scott plowed into them. Stiles winced. At the very least, Scott was going to have some seriously painful splinters after that.

"We're battling a witch- like, an actual witch- and all you care about is missing your movie?" Scott asked incredulously, allowing Isaac to help him to his feet.

"It's *The Avengers*, dude. *The Avengers*!" Stiles had tried, but somehow he could not seem to convey to Scott just how badass this movie was going to be. He flinched as one of Allison's arrows zipped past his face. "Why can't we have a single Saturday night that doesn't consist of battling the forces of darkness?"

The witch was speaking in tongues now, which was super unsettling, and

Scott and Isaac were attempting to corner her while she was distracted with Allison. "I wish there was something we could do to help." Lydia lamented.

There was a burst of light, and suddenly Allison's arrows had turned into snakes, which writhed around on the warehouse floor in a way that made Stiles' stomach churn. Lydia shrieked, nearly splitting his eardrums. He forced her behind him, which would have been very heroic if his body could have possibly offered her any protection at all.

"You wanna help? Don't die. That'll be a huge help." He really wished he'd brought his baseball bat. Most of the snakes were focusing on those of them who posed an actual threat, but one stray beast was slithering towards them. Stiles stiffened, preparing to strike as soon as he got the nerve, but when the snake was mere inches away Lydia flung herself towards it and pierced it with her heel. "Oh my god, what is wrong with you?" Death by Prada. The snake gave a final twitch before stilling, blood oozing from the wound in what Stiles assumed was its neck. Did snakes have necks?

"I killed it!" Lydia said indignantly. "And I sacrificed my favorite shoes to do it, so you'd better be grateful!"

"I think I'm going to be sick."

"Lydia! Stiles!" Allison was attempting to defend herself from the snakes with only her bow, Scott was fighting the witch one-on-one, and Isaac had somehow gotten himself knocked unconscious in the thirty seconds they'd been distracted. Stiles always missed everything good. Including his movie.

"I'm going to help Ally, you help Scott." Lydia was gone before he had the chance to point out that they were probably all going to die, which was a little disappointing. If they were going to die, Stiles would at least like to be the one to have predicted it.

The witch had Scott by the throat, and her eyes were glowing- which was something Stiles should really be used to by now considering like fifty percent of his friends were werewolves. "I'm coming, Scott!"

Stiles looked around desperately, hoping to find a suitable baseball bat substitute. His eyes fell on the broken crates, which appeared to be filled with pieces of piping. "That'll do, pig." He said to no one in particular. "Hang on, dude!" Wielding the pipe like a sword, he lunged towards the witch, only to find himself frozen by her stare. Like, literally frozen. He couldn't move. All he could do was watch as she flung Scott aside, like a little werewolf doll, and think about how fucking heavy the stupid pipe was.

The witch narrowed her eyes at him. "You talk too much." She said at last, her fingers working the pendant around her neck. Then, with a flick of her wrist, Stiles could move again.

Yeah, I get that a lot. Stiles said. Except he didn't. He thought the words, and his mouth moved to form them, but no sound came out. He cleared his throat. *I get that a lot.* He repeated, this time more deliberately. It occurred to him that maybe he was deaf. Maybe Lydia's screaming had finally done in his hearing. But he could still hear Scott moaning on the floor, could still listen as Allison unsheathed her knife. And he could still hear the words the witch said to him.

"Yes, that's better." She smiled a smile that was fitting of Peter Hale.

What did you do to me!? Stiles tried to scream. He imagined he must have looked ridiculous, like a soap opera star on a mute television. All dramatic movements, with no words to give them meaning. He shouted in silence as the witch turned her attention back to Allison.

Stiles knew that his friends were in trouble, that they needed him, but right now it felt like all of the air had gone out of the room. He could feel a panic attack coming on. It bubbled under his skin like magma under the earth. *Breathe.* He said, but when the word didn't reach his ears he only began to panic more. *I can't talk. Why can't I talk?*

"Stiles?" Lydia had her hands on his shoulders, and he wondered when she'd gotten there. He was usually so hyperaware of Lydia's presence. "Stiles, what is it? Did she do something to you? Talk to me!" Her emerald eyes were bright with worry, and they brought Stiles back down to earth.

Shaking, he knelt down and began tracing letters in the dust. Lydia hovered at his side, reading the words that he could not say. "She... cast... a spell... that took... my... voice."

xxx

The next day, Allison was sporting a black eye, and Lydia had a glaring red gash across her cheek. Scott and Isaac's werewolf powers had healed their wounds, but they still looked dead tired as they took their seats at the table. Despite everyone's moans and groans, Stiles was convinced that he'd gotten off worse than any of them. And he would have said so. If he could still talk.

Get me a burger, fries, and a chocolate shake. He scribbled in his notepad. Stiles had taken to carrying it with him. The past twelve hours had proven that, voice or no voice, he was incapable of not expressing his every thought and feeling without exploding- hence the notepad. *No onions.* He underlined this several times, because Scott may have superhuman strength and speed and healing abilities, but he was still dense as fuck.

"You got it, dude." Scott slapped his shoulder and gave him the same sympathetic half-smile he'd been giving him every five minutes since last night. Stiles wanted to tell him that he was fine, that he didn't need to worry about him. He wanted to, but he couldn't, on account of some satanic hell woman had cursed him, probably for all eternity.

"Maybe it will wear off?" Lydia suggested, as though she'd been reading his mind. The thought was not entirely ridiculous. Lydia having telepathic powers seemed a lot more probable than half of the things that had happened to them in the last year. Stiles shrugged. "Or maybe the spell has to be broken somehow. You know, like in fairy tales? Maybe you just have to, I don't know, kiss a prince or something." Stiles doubted he'd be able to find a prince anywhere in Beacon Hills, much less one that would be willing to kiss him.

Scott and Allison returned with their food. To his dismay, Stiles lifted the bun to find onions on his burger.

"So... what's the plan?" Scott said around mouthfuls of pizza.

Lydia pursed her lips in distaste. "Research." She said, spearing a leaf of lettuce with her fork. "We can't help Stiles until we know exactly what happened to him. We've never dealt with anything like this before. The more we can find out, the better."

Why don't we ask Stiles what he thinks? Stiles thought bitterly. He scraped the onions off his sandwich, but they were so finely chopped he knew he'd never get all of them off.

"What if there's nothing we can do?" Isaac mused. Scott shot him a glare. "I'm sorry! But everybody is thinking it. We're in way over our heads. Are we supposed to just pretend that everything is going to be fine, when there's a good chance that Stiles will never talk again?"

No one appreciates your candor, Lahey. Stiles abandoned his burger, which was forever tainted with the taste of onion. *Also, your scarf looks stupid. It's eighty degrees outside, moron.*

To his credit, Scott seemed to be just as disgusted with Isaac as Stiles was. "Stiles is going to be fine!" He said fiercely.

"Scott..." Allison ran her fingers through her hair, the way she always did when she was frustrated. "Isaac has a point. We have to be realistic here. Stiles might not..."

Stiles is sitting right here. Stiles wanted to say. No, he wanted to shout. He knew his friends meant well, but they were all sitting around, talking about him like he wasn't right there. Like he was dying. They already couldn't hear him, and now it was like they couldn't see him, either. Suddenly, he felt the need to do his best impression of the Incredible Hulk. He had to get out of there.

As he slunk out of the food court, Stiles wondered how long it would be before his friends noticed he was gone. When he got to the parking lot, he took his anger out on his jeep, kicking the tires until he was sure he'd

broken half of his toes.

His cell phone went off about a dozen times on his way, but he ignored it. All he could think about was how dry his mouth was. It was probably just his imagination, but it felt like a desert had formed on his tongue overnight. It wasn't until he took the last turn towards the woods that he even realized where he'd been driving.

It was summer, and the forest was thick with leaves. Green ones above, and brown ones below that crunched beneath his feet. Derek's house stood stark against the golden afternoon. Stiles wasn't sure why he'd come here. He hadn't spoken to Derek since the incident with Gerard, and the two of them had never been anything but annoyances to one another. Maybe it was because even without his voice, Derek would still probably talk less than Stiles would. And he needed that right now. He needed someone that he could just be quiet around.

Derek must have smelled him, creepy as he was, because he was on the porch before Stiles had even reached the front steps. "What do you want?"

Ah, Derek, ever the gracious host. Stiles thought. He scribbled something in his notepad, tore out the piece of paper, and handed it to Derek as he brushed past him. He heard Derek read it aloud as he let himself into the house, or what remained of it.

"A crazy witch took my voice, and my friends are driving me insane. I'm gonna crash here for a while. Do you have any chips?" Derek followed him inside, clearly very annoyed. "What do you expect me to do, baby-sit you all day?" Stiles gave him a look that clearly said 'you and I both know that you've got nothing better to do.' Derek frowned at him for a minute, then sighed. "Doritos or potato chips?"

The Hale house was surprisingly comfortable, once you got past the blackened walls, smoky stench, and overall sense of doom and depression. Derek had restored some of the floors, so that one could walk about freely without having to worry about crashing through and falling to their death. He also had running water and electricity, which had surprised Stiles for

some reason. Obviously Derek hadn't been bathing in streams for the past few years, but it was still odd to picture him doing anything as ordinary as taking a shower. Derek in the shower. Stiles flushed. That was something he definitely did not want to think about.

They settled down in the small room next to the kitchen. Derek had transformed what used to be the family room into a makeshift rec room, complete with a modest television, a record player, and a card table. There was also an old sofa, something that Derek must have picked out himself. The couch didn't match the rest of the house's half-burnt décor, which Stiles assumed had been purchased by Derek's mother. It was a tacky leopard print, with stuffing oozing out of the cushions. It was probably the ugliest thing Stiles had ever seen. It was, however, clean, and if Derek had bought it after the fire that meant that nobody had probably died on it. Stiles sat down gingerly, half afraid that it would fall apart under his weight.

"I know, it's hideous." Derek, it seemed, shared Lydia's ability to read minds. "I wasn't much of an interior decorator. I'm still not, I guess. I should probably get a new one." He picked at the fraying fabric, and it dawned on Stiles that Derek- alpha Derek, Derek who could rip him to pieces with his pinky- was self-conscious. "I, um, I don't really have guests... a lot."

For the first time since he'd been cursed, Stiles was grateful that he couldn't talk. He had absolutely no idea what to say. He uncapped his pen again and scrawled something he hoped was encouraging. *The couch is nice.* Not Pulitzer Prize winning stuff, but it was something.

Derek snorted. "What, did that witch also take away your ability to tell the truth?"

Ok, either Derek was definitely telepathic, or Stiles was incredibly transparent as well a mute, hyperactive virgin. He tried again. *All right, the couch sucks. It looks like Good Will threw up. But it has character.* Stiles considered what to write for a moment. *Also, the chips are good.*

This seemed to appease Derek, though he wasn't as amused as he should

have been, in Stiles' opinion. He wondered what it would take to make Derek laugh, or at least smile. A smirk would suffice. Just any indication that he wasn't as utterly and completely miserable as he wanted everyone to think he was. And then it hit Stiles- he knew how he was going to keep himself entertained until he was free from his voiceless hell. He was going to make Derek smile, even if it killed him. And knowing Derek, that was a very real possibility.

"So... um, do you want to play cards or something?" Stiles realized that they'd been sitting without talking (or writing, in his case) for several minutes. He nodded, eager to begin his experiment in Derekology.

They sat across from each other at the small folding table, and Derek dealt a deck of battered playing cards between them. "Do you know poker?" Stiles nodded again. He and Scott had spent one summer obsessed with card games. Well, he'd been obsessed, Scott had been tolerant. "It's been a long time since I've played." Derek admitted, his sheepishness resurfacing. If he hadn't been a six-foot tall brooding werewolf, Stiles would have thought it was almost cute. Almost.

The two of them played for a while, using potato chips instead of poker chips, and listening to the record Derek had put on. Stiles didn't recognize the music, but it was nice. Classical, not at all something he'd have pictured Derek enjoying. He was learning all kinds of things about Derek today. Like Derek had a terrible poker face. Also, Derek did not appreciate being kicked under the table or accused of cheating, even if it was only in writing.

After about half an hour, Stiles predictably got distracted. *Wanna see something cool?* Derek looked at him blankly, which Stiles took as a 'hell yes'. He collected the cards, even though they'd been in the middle of a game, and shuffled them before fanning them out in front of him. He looked at Derek pointedly, then back at the cards. *Pick one.* He didn't have to write it down, Derek understood. *Now put it back.* Derek slipped his card back into the deck, and watched Stiles re-shuffle. His eyes betrayed a hint of interest. Had they always been that blue? The cards fumbled in Stiles' fingers. He did his best to keep his cool as he produced the tattered card

from the pile. *Is this your card?* He said, by means of waving it under Derek's nose. Derek frowned and shook his head.

"No, I had the six of clubs." Stiles was holding the queen of diamonds. *Close enough.* He thought. Derek was less than impressed. "What were you doing messing around with a witch, anyway?"

Where did that come from? *It's a long story.* Stiles wrote.

To his surprise, Derek took his notebook and scrawled something himself. *I've got time.*

Stiles snatched the pen and paper back. *You don't have to write down what you want to say, stupid. You didn't lose your voice.* In the second sentence, he underlined the words 'you' and 'your' for emphasis.

Derek commandeered the notebook again, this time almost tearing the pages as he wrested it from Stiles. *I know that, dumbass.* He paused for a moment, thinking about what to write next. *I guess it just feels wrong for me to talk when you can't.* He wrote at last.

Stiles was touched, and seriously, these had been the weirdest twenty-four hours of his life. He'd been cursed by a witch, lost his voice, and now he and Derek Hale of all people were having a moment. Curiouser and curiouser.

Fifteen minutes and two and a half pages later, he'd managed to transcribe his experience in the warehouse for Derek. Also, his pen was starting to run out of ink.

She turned the arrows into snakes? And Lydia killed one with her shoe?

Yeah, dude, it was like the sickest thing I've seen in my entire life! Well, maybe not the sickest thing... I have seen Jackson naked. But second sickest, for sure.

Derek made a sound that was almost a laugh. He sort of blew air out of his nose really hard, but he was clearly signifying amusement. *Seriously,*

though, Stiles. You don't want to mess around with witches. They have a kind of power that we couldn't even begin to understand.

No arguments here. If I never see a witch again, it will be too soon. Did I mention that her eyes glowed?

Yes. Several times.

It was crazy!

When the sun began to set, Stiles decided that he'd better head home. He still had to figure out what he was going to say- well, write- to his dad. Derek made sure to tell him not to 'get lost or eaten by anything on the way home', which was almost like saying 'goodnight'. He was surprised by how much better his time with Derek had made him feel. Yesterday he would have said he'd rather be tarred and feathered than spend afternoon playing cards with Derek Hale in his haunted house. But then, yesterday he would have said a lot of things. Yesterday, he had a voice.

As soon as he got home, he picked up the phone to call Scott, only realizing after several rings what an idiotic idea that had been. Instead he fired up his laptop and sent him an instant message.

Sorry about earlier. Had to get away. This whole 'The Artist' thing is driving me berserk.

It took all of twenty seconds for Scott to reply.

It's fine! We were just worried about you! Allison is here. She says that she and Lydia are working on a way to break the curse.

Stiles felt like an enormous ass. It wasn't his friends' fault that he'd lost his voice. In fact, Stiles had no doubt that Scott would have given him his own voice if he could have. It was just so hard when you had a mind like a hornet's nest and couldn't share your thoughts without first learning sign language. He didn't know how Derek did it. The whole strong-and-silent act must be exhausting.

That's great! Tell them I said thanks, and sorry for earlier. I'll start doing some research, too.

And he did. He spent a total of five whole minutes surfing the web, then fell asleep at his desk. Stiles woke up with a keyboard imprint on his cheek.

xxx

Derek wasn't waiting for him on the porch like he had been the day before, but the front door was open, so Stiles knew he must have sensed him coming. He found Derek in the kitchen, frying something that smelled amazing.

Knock, knock. Stiles wrote, and this time Derek definitely snorted.

"Come in, Stiles." He replied dryly. "What the hell do you have in that bag?" Stiles emptied the contents of his backpack onto the kitchen table by means of an answer. Derek was unimpressed. "You'd better clear those off before I eat."

Sure thing, mom. Stiles piled the books in his arms and moved them to the rec room.

He'd gotten up early to avoid his father, who'd been working late last night and still had no idea that his son was supernaturally mute. After inhaling a bowl of cereal, he'd headed straight for the library, where he had planned to spend his day researching in peace. However, even without his voice, Stiles had found the library too quiet. The silence was stifling, and he couldn't focus. He'd considered going over to Scott's, but there was a good chance that Allison had slept over the night before, and he had interrupted the two of them making out (among other things) enough times to know when to give them their privacy. Lydia's house was out of the question as well—when Lydia was in research mode, it was safer for everyone if she was left alone. Isaac was staying at Scott's house, and that only left Danny, who was still blissfully ignorant of his friends' paranormal pastimes.

And so, for the second time in as many days, Stiles had gone to Derek's

house. Besides, he was still determined to figure out what it took to make Derek smile.

The delicious smelling thing in the pan turned out to be an omelet, which Derek offered to split with Stiles. He was a) taken aback by Derek's generosity, and b) super tempted to accept, because it smelled amazing. *Thanks, but I already ate.* Stiles wrote. *I didn't know you knew how to cook.*

Derek started to say something, then stopped. He took the notebook from Stiles. *My mom taught me. Before she died. I'm not nearly as good as she was, though.*

Stiles found that he didn't know how to respond, and not because he had nothing to say. On the contrary, there were a lot of things he wanted to tell Derek- things he'd never have imagined sharing with him until yesterday- and he wasn't sure where to start. He wanted to tell him that he loved omelets, but pancakes were his favorite. He wanted to tell him about his mother, and how she couldn't cook to save her life, so he and his dad had always fixed their meals.

He wanted to ask him things, too. It seemed criminal that he hadn't known about Derek's records, or his shitty poker face, or his cooking. He wondered what else he didn't know about him. Finally, he settled on something simple. *The food is great! 10/10, would recommend.*

And then it happened. Derek smiled. It wasn't much, the corner of his mouth just barely twitched, but it was enough to make Stiles melt. If his heart was racing, Derek didn't seem to notice. Maybe he hadn't turned his werewolf hearing on yet. He'd gone back to his meal, and wasn't even looking at Stiles. It didn't seem fair. How could he turn Stiles' whole world upside-down with just a smile and not even notice. Nobody had made him feel like this before except for Lydia. Lydia, and maybe Ryan Reynolds once or twice.

I'm gonna go get started on researching. He retreated to the rec room and buried himself in a book before Derek gave him any more reasons to question his sexuality.

Stiles considered taking off before he inevitably made an ass of himself. But no matter how convinced he was that Derek could smell the sexual frustration he was emitting, he couldn't bring himself to leave. He was just getting to know Derek, and there was still so much he wanted to learn about him. Also, he still hadn't seen Derek really smile. And so, there he stayed, curled up on the ugliest couch in the universe, with a book of ancient spells on his lap, and a funny feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Derek joined him about ten minutes later. Stiles knew he was trying to be helpful, but his presence was more distracting than anything. He tried to focus on what he was reading, but all he could think about was how close their thighs were, and how intense Derek's gaze was when he was focused. He read the same sentence four times without understanding a single word. He finally had to angle himself away from the werewolf so that he could possibly get something done.

They read in silence (as if Stiles had any choice) until noon. Over lunch, Stiles forced himself to ration his glances. He allowed himself to look at Derek only when Derek wasn't paying attention, and for no more than three seconds at a time. Half way through their ham sandwiches, Derek passed him a note. *Are you pissed at me or something?*

Stiles was so surprised, he almost forgot that he couldn't answer. He started to respond, but when only a rasp came out he remembered why he'd been researching for the past two hours in the first place. He shook his head instead. *No! Why would I be?*

Derek shrugged. *I don't know, you've just been acting weird. Weirder than usual, I mean.* Stiles pulled a face at him. *I mean, you won't even look at me. So you're not mad?*

No. Stiles underlined the word twice, feeling like an ass for the second time that week. He hoped that acting like a douchebag was only a side effect of the spell. *Look, I know I've always given you a hard time, but you've been super cool these past couple of days! I mean, you didn't have to let me chill here. Plus, you helped me research, which was awesome. I'm just being stupid. Sorry.* So obviously he was going to have to continue making eye

contact with Derek if he didn't want to totally freak him out. He could do that.

They went back to researching after lunch, and after another hour of fruitlessness and frustration, they managed to find something that might actually be helpful.

Apparently, there were over one hundred different Wiccan factions, each with their own unique practices and powers. The witch they'd been fighting was a Daughter of Hecate, and she was pretty nice compared to some of the other witches in the books. There was this clan in Sri Lanka that turned their victims inside out, and Stiles really could have lived without that mental picture.

"It says here that the Daughters of Hecate get their magic from a Power Center. Like, a pendant or something. Did you notice anything like that when you were fighting her?" Derek asked.

Stiles thought back to the night in the warehouse. There had been so much chaos, and so many reptiles. But now that he thought about, he did remember a sort of campy medallion around the witch's throat. He nodded. *Yeah, she had a weird necklace with a pendant on it. It was really tacky.*

Derek scanned the rest of the page, and Stiles leaned over his shoulder for a better look, personal space be damned. "It also says that while the Daughters of Hecate cast irreversible curses, if their Power Center is broken they'll lose their magic, and any spell they've ever cast will be broken. That's it!" Derek snapped the book shut, looking pleased with himself. Stiles was pretty fucking pleased with him too, actually. They knew how to get his voice back- now it was just a matter of not dying in the process.

I'm going to text Scott.

It had been less than forty-eight hours, but Stiles was already going crazy without his voice. The thought of being able to talk again made him giddy. He swore he was going to burn that godforsaken notebook when all of this was over.

"You're smiling like an idiot." Derek said, and Stiles, because he was feeling bold, gave Derek a playful shove in return. Derek raised his eyebrows, but he kindly refrained from ripping Stiles' throat out.

Sorry. I'm just excited!

Derek went back to writing, even though he'd been talking since lunch. *It's ok. He wrote. That's probably enough research for one day. Do you want to watch tv or something?* Stiles wondered if Derek was writing again because he was too shy to say things like that out loud. He could snap and scold all he wanted, but when it came to being nice, maybe it was easier for him to do it on paper. That was fine with Stiles. Honestly, it was kind of adorable.

Sounds good.

Six hours later, he woke up very confused, and with a terrible case of bedhead. He'd fallen asleep in the middle of some nature documentary, and he wondered why Derek hadn't bothered to wake him up. Stiles dug his phone out of the couch cushions and used the light from the screen to illuminate the room.

Ah. So that's why he hadn't woken him up. It seemed that Derek, too, had fallen asleep, though his hair was in a much better state than Stiles'. He looked different somehow. Younger. The frown lines that he wore like war paint had fallen away. When Derek was asleep, all of the worry and pain disappeared from his face, and he looked so peaceful, happy, even. Stiles wished he had the kind of power that the night had- the power to take away all of Derek's pain. He would have given his voice to see Derek like this by the light of day.

He suddenly felt very stalkerish, watching Derek while he slept. Stiles prodded him in the shoulder, laughing noiselessly when Derek tried to bat his hand away.

"Don't you know better than to wake a sleeping werewolf?" Derek grumbled, stretching. His shirt rose, revealing his toned and tanned stomach, and the trail of thick dark hair that disappeared beneath his belt.

Stiles hoped that Derek couldn't see him blushing in the dark, although he did have werewolf night vision. "What time is it?" Unable to answer, Stiles threw his phone at Derek's face. Derek caught it, of course, and frowned at the screen. "Jesus, how did it get to be so late? You might as well just stay here for tonight."

Even if he wasn't mute, Stiles wasn't sure he would have been able to respond to that. Had Derek really just invited him to stay the night?

"I mean, it's way too dangerous for you to walk back to your car. And you'll probably just come back here in the morning, anyway." Derek yawned. "You can take the bed. I'll sleep on the couch. But if you drool on my pillow, I will bite you." Stiles just nodded, and tried desperately not to pass out.

Derek's bed was warm and soft, but Stiles had no idea how he could possibly sleep in it. It was *Derek's* bed. He wondered if Derek had pajamas, or if he just slept in boxers. Derek didn't seem like the pajama type. What if he slept in the nude? Stiles tried to force the thought out of his head and rolled over for the hundredth time. He buried his face in the pillow, Derek's pillow. It smelled like coffee and aftershave. He finally fell asleep, breathing in Derek's scent and trying not to think about whether Derek had ever masturbated in that bed before.

xxx

The next morning they had pancakes and read the paper, like a suburban married couple. Derek let Stiles use his shower, and once again Stiles found himself thinking about Derek's masturbatory habits. When he came back downstairs- after enjoying the coldest shower of his life- Derek already had stuck his nose in a book. Stiles plopped down beside him on the leopard print couch. He was starting to grow fond of the old thing, really. Even if it was only like seven percent stuffing at this point.

They weren't as successful as they had been the day before. It turned out that most of the books said the same thing, if they said anything useful at all. Break the Power Center, break the curse. But there was no information

about how to break the Power Center, or how to get the Power Center without being eviscerated, and by noon Stiles felt like tearing his hair out.

"We need to get out of this house." Derek said at last. "We should go get lunch or something." Stiles shrugged. He felt irritable and restless and, above all, totally hopeless. He didn't see how lunch was going to help him get his voice back. "Come on, we could use the fresh air. You do know that the books will be here when we get back, don't you?"

Stiles scowled. Derek was not very good at sarcasm, and he would have told him so if he could have. "All right, up you go." Derek grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and hauled him to his feet. Stiles laughed and swatted Derek until he let him go, and by the time they reached the restaurant he was smiling again. He would have to add 'mood altering capabilities' to the list of secret super powers he suspected Derek possessed.

They ate at a coffee shop not far from the high school. Derek ordered for both of them- sandwiches and lemonade- and they ate outside under a striped umbrella. Stiles had left his notebook at the house, so they borrowed a pen from their waitress and scribbled notes on napkins. *Tell me more about your mother.* Stiles wrote.

Their waitress returned with the bill to find their table covered in inky napkins. He wasn't sure why, but Stiles couldn't bring himself to throw them away. When Derek wasn't looking, he stuffed them in his backpack.

On the way back to Derek's, they lingered in the woods. It was a beautiful day, although Derek would never admit it, and Stiles couldn't say so. They stopped by the creek that ran past the house. They didn't write notes; they just enjoyed the weather and each other's company in silence.

xxx

The next few days blended together in a blur of quiet and Derek. They ate together, researched together, went on walks together. When it rained, they played cards or watched movies. Sometimes Stiles spent the night, other times he went home- but he always came back the next day. "Like a really

annoying boomerang," as Derek had put it.

They had gotten better at communicating without talking. Stiles didn't even have to write what he was thinking half the time. Derek could tell when he was hungry or tired or frustrated just by looking at him. Maybe it was only Derek's animal instinct, or maybe he was more sensitive to other people's emotions than he'd admit. Personally, Stiles thought it was the latter.

That Saturday was Stiles' one week anniversary with being mute, and he decided he wanted to celebrate. He showed up on Derek's step that morning with an armful of cleaning supplies; soap, towels, sponges, a bucket, and a mop. Derek's face when he opened the door was priceless. "Stiles, why do you look like a school janitor?" Stiles dumped the supplies in the kitchen and went to fetch his notepad.

We're doing something different today. He wrote.

Derek raised his eyebrows. "Are we going to be in a music video?"

Stiles grinned and shook his head. His second message took him longer to write.

You've done so much for me this past week, so today I thought I'd do something for you. We're going to clean this place up. I know that doesn't sound like fun, but it will be great! There will be singing animals to help us out and everything.

Derek sighed heavily, but a smile was already forming at the corners of his mouth. It still wasn't a fully formed, teeth-baring, cheek-splitting smile, but it was something that Stiles could definitely get used to seeing. "If you splash me with water, I will kill you. And they will never find the body."

xxx

It rained on Sunday, but Stiles didn't mind staying inside so much now that the house was clean. He and Derek had scrubbed the floors, washed the windows, mopped, swept, dusted, polished, and otherwise cleaned every

surface of the house until it sparkled. And, yes, Stiles had splashed Derek with water. Twice.

They hadn't been able to do anything about the parts of the house that had been blackened by the fire, but they had made plans to paint over them another time. Other than that, the house looked perfect. It was still a little empty, even for one person, but you definitely couldn't tell that anyone had died tragically inside.

Derek wanted to go out and buy a new couch, but Stiles had objected. He loved that couch, atrocious as it was, and he'd insisted it was staying. Stiles had spent some of his happiest, albeit quietest, days on that couch, and he'd be damned if he was going to let Derek replace it.

They were sitting on said sofa, watching one of Stiles' all-time favorite movies, *The Dark Knight*. Normally, he would have said every line along with the actors, complete with his best impression of their voice. However, considering he couldn't even do his best impression of his own voice right now, he settled for mouthing the words at the screen. *Do you wanna know how I got these scars?* Derek rolled his eyes.

The rain was falling in sheets against the house, and every now and then lightning would pierce the gloom, a clap of thunder following it like an afterthought. The creek would be flooded the next day, and the forest would smell like springtime. Inside, the television lit the room, casting shadows on their faces.

Why so serious? Stiles wished he could say the words aloud. It was his favorite scene.

"How many times have you seen this movie?" Derek asked.

Stiles shrugged. *I lost count after twelve.* He wrote. *It's probably more like twenty or thirty times by now. Scott won't watch it with me anymore. He says he's seen it too many times. Like that's even possible. You can never see 'The Dark Knight' too many times.*

Derek chuckled. "Poor Scott." He looked like he wanted to say something more, but he didn't. Instead, he took the notebook from Stiles. *How come you aren't hanging out with Scott? Didn't you guys make up?*

On screen, the Joker was forcing some henchmen to fight to the death. Stiles wasn't paying attention.

It was a good question, and one he'd expected for a while now. After all, he and Scott had made up a week ago, but he'd still spent every day with Derek since he'd lost his voice. *I guess it's just hard to be around him right now.* Stiles wrote, choosing his words carefully. *It's hard to be around all of them. I love Scott and Lydia and everyone to death, but they aren't like you.* He felt his cheeks heating up. This was starting to sound dangerously like a confession. *When I'm with you, it doesn't matter if I can talk or not. It's like you already know what I'm going to say. Does that make sense?*

After a moment, Derek nodded. *Are you still going to come over when you get your voice back?*

Of course! Stiles could feel his heart hammering against his ribcage, and he was sure Derek could hear it. *I mean, if you want me to. I like hanging out with you. I'm sure I'll like it even more when I can actually talk to you. I'm a boomerang, remember?* For good measure, he doodled a little boomerang in the margins and gave it a smiley face. *That's me.* He wrote under it. It looked like a wet banana.

When Derek smiled, Stiles half-expected the rain to stop and the sun to come out. The way Derek's eye crinkled in the corners, the way he bit his lower lip, and his dimples- holy shit, Derek had dimples. If Stiles wasn't totally in love with him before, he was now.

He was at serious risk of fucking up whatever he and Derek had started this past week, but Stiles was impulsive and hormonal, and Derek was just sitting there smiling with the most adorable, kissable mouth in the universe. It took all of Stiles' will not to jump Derek's bones then and there.

Instead, he reached out and touched Derek's face, forcing himself to meet

his gaze. He cupped Derek's cheek in his hand, stubble rough against his palm. Then, slowly, he began to trace Derek's mouth with his thumb. He brushed over his lips, his eyes never leaving Derek's.

Stiles didn't realize he was holding his breath until Derek grabbed his arm. He thought Derek was going to push him away, but he just held him, his fingers ghosting over the inside of his wrist.

He wanted so desperately to tell Derek what he was thinking, what he was feeling. He wanted to tell him that he wanted him, that he was scared, that he loved his smile. He opened his mouth, even though he knew the words wouldn't come out. "It's okay." Derek whispered, and Stiles knew he understood. Somehow, Derek always understood.

Their mouths grazed clumsily. Derek's lips were rough, but gentle. Stiles wound his arms around him, one hand gripping his shirt, the other fisted in his hair. How he'd survived a single day of his life without doing this, he had no idea.

As the kiss deepened, Derek pried his tongue between Stiles' lips, and Stiles opened them eagerly. They were a mess of teeth and tongues and breathy sighs.

The rain outside fell harder. Thunder shook the house, and the movie played on, but they didn't notice.

Stiles' hands began to wander. They trailed down Derek's chest, over his back, up his thigh. He wanted to touch every part of him. He wanted to memorize him and forget him and memorize him all over again.

Derek bit Stiles' lower lip, and Stiles broke away with a gasp. Derek chuckled as his kisses traveled down Stiles' neck. He took the soft skin there between his teeth and nipped and yeah, Stiles was pretty sure he was trying to turn him into a werewolf, or at least give him the world's largest hickey.

Stiles wished he could moan. Derek's hand was under his shirt now, and it

was glorious, but it wasn't enough. He needed more.

He slid his leg over Derek's lap so he was straddling him, and their mouths crashed together again. They kissed, only stopping to pull their shirts over their heads, then kissed some more. Stiles was getting hard in his jeans. He pressed forward and his crotch ground against Derek's. He swore he saw stars. "Stiles..." Derek's voice was heavy with lust. "Stiles... we have to stop..."

Stiles pulled away, confused, and very aroused. He'd been two seconds away from ripping off Derek's pants, but suddenly it was like there was a barrier between them. Had he done something wrong? He knew he wasn't very experienced, but that hadn't seemed to bother Derek when they were playing tonsil hockey a minute ago.

He must have looked as perplexed as he felt, because Derek's face softened and he tried to explain. "I'm sorry. It's not that I don't want to... believe me, I do. But it just feels wrong."

Because I'm a guy?

Because I'm younger than you?

Because you could have anyone in the world and I'm just a skinny magical mute?

Stiles tried to twist out of Derek's grip, but it was awkward while he was still straddling him, and also Derek had super strength. "Stiles, would you just listen to me? I want to have sex with you, ok?" That got Stiles' attention, so Derek continued. "It just doesn't seem right to do it when you don't have your voice. Look, you're a virgin, aren't you?" Stiles' blush was all the confirmation he needed. "Stiles, communication is a very important part of sex, especially when it's your first time. If you can't talk, how am I supposed to know what you're comfortable with? What if I... Stiles, what if I hurt you?"

Derek looked so sincere, and more than a little like a lost puppy. Stiles

knew that he was right. He nodded, then scribbled something on the notepad. *I can't believe you almost took my virginity on this fucking couch.* Derek smiled. It was that goddamn smile that had started this whole mess in the first place.

xxx

The next day, for the first time, Derek wasn't home.

Stiles' boots sank into the mud of the forest floor as he trudged up to the house. The trees were the kind of green they could only be after the rain, and the air was thick and humid.

Derek wasn't outside, and his door was locked. Stiles spent the better part of ten minutes trying to pick the lock before he resorted to knocking. And knocking. But there was no answer.

Stiles panicked, because he was Stiles. He wondered if Derek had grown tired of him, or if yesterday's make-out session had freaked him out. Then he started imagining the possible life-and-death scenarios that could be keeping Derek away.

What if Derek had been captured? It seemed like one of them was always getting captured for some reason. Or what if Derek had lost control and changed? The full moon was still a week away, so that probably wasn't it. But what if Derek had accidentally swallowed some wolfs' bane and he was out in the forest somewhere, dying, thinking of Stiles in his last moments...

He ran three stop signs on the way to Scott's house, sheriff's son or not.

Scott looked more confused than usual when he answered the door. "Oh, Stiles! You aren't Derek." He narrowed his eyes and sniffed. "Why do you smell like Derek?"

Fucking werewolves.

Allison and Isaac were both in the kitchen, fighting over who got the last piece of pepperoni pizza. "Stiles! It's so good to see you!" Allison gave him

a hug, and Isaac sort of nodded at him in greeting. "We've missed you! Where have you been?"

"And why do you reek of Hale?" Isaac made a face at the smell.

Stiles chose to ignore him. *I've been busy. Researching and stuff.* He wrote. *I missed you guys, too.*

"What did you tell your dad?" Allison asked.

Laryngitis.

"We've been researching all week." Scott told him. "Have you found anything yet? I mean, besides the Power Center thing."

He shrugged, hoping he looked nonchalant. *I was going to look into that some more today, but I kind of left all my books at Derek's house, and he isn't home.* Stiles wasn't lying, he was just leaving out parts of the truth. Parts like how he and Derek had sucked face and now Derek was missing, possibly dead, and he was freaking out. *Have any of you guys heard from him?*

Scott and Allison shook their heads. "Why did you leave your books at Derek's?" Isaac frowned. "Have you been hanging out with him this whole time? I thought you two didn't even like each other."

Stiles just didn't feel like explaining that, though he and Derek had had their differences in the past, it had all stemmed from sexual tension that they had resolved after getting to know each other better this past week. Instead, he wrote, *We hang out sometimes. So have you seen him?*

Isaac had not seen Derek. Neither had Lydia or Jackson, and Erica and Boyd were missing, as well. Stiles' fear that Derek was in some kind of danger was beginning to grow. He and Scott drove all over town, then searched the woods, but if Derek was dying, it seemed like he wasn't doing it in Beacon Hills.

"We'll look again tomorrow, okay?" Scott promised.

Stiles nodded, and they climbed back into his jeep. Between his voice and Derek, it seemed like Stiles was losing a lot of things this summer. Not his virginity, like he'd hoped to, but a lot of things.

"You're really worried about him, aren't you?" Stiles pretended to fiddle with the radio, but there was no bullshitting Scott. He was his best friend, and he had werewolf senses on top of that. "I guess you guys have gotten pretty close lately, huh?"

Stiles pulled out onto the dirt road that led back to town, shooting Scott a glance that he hoped said 'drop it'. And Scott did drop it, at least until they got back to his house. "So... are you two, like... dating?" Stiles was so taken aback that he accidentally hit the panic button that set off his car alarm.

Between bursts of loud, obnoxious beeping, Stiles groped in his bag for the notebook. *No*. He wrote, because they weren't. He and Derek were something, but dating wasn't exactly it.

"It's cool if you are, you know." Scott said. "I mean, I wouldn't care. I just want you to be happy, dude. You're my best friend!"

Stiles had to smile, even though he was cranky and tired and worried and a little uncomfortable with this conversation. *Thanks, man. But Derek and I really aren't dating. We're just hanging out.*

Scott looked unconvinced. "Does 'hanging out' really mean 'having lots and lots of sex'?" Stiles was sure he was turning twelve different shades of pink. Scott laughed. "I'm sorry, dude, but Isaac was right- you totally reek of Derek!"

The car alarm finally stopped beeping. Stiles sighed, knowing there was no use arguing with a werewolf's nose. *Tell you what. He wrote. When we find Derek and he and I sort things out, and I get my goddamn voice back, then I'll fill you in on everything. Okay?*

Scott looked satisfied. "Deal."

xxx

Stiles' phone rang a little after midnight, and he was still half-asleep when he answered it. "Hello?"

"Hi, Stiles." Derek's voice was tired, but smug. "Miss me?"

"Derek!" Stiles sat up, suddenly wide awake. "Where were you? I was worried! Scott and I looked everywhere for you! I thought you were dying or something... why are you laughing?"

Apparently, Derek found Stiles' near heat attack hilarious. "Say, Stiles, how's that laryngitis of yours?"

"I don't have laryngitis. I'm just mute..." And damn, Stiles was an idiot. "Oh, my god! I can talk! I'm talking! Words are coming out of my mouth right now and you're hearing them!" He was absolutely giddy. He felt like reading the phone book out loud, just for the hell of it. "What did you do? How did you do this?"

"Come over. Now." Derek hung up, still chuckling.

Stiles had never gotten dressed so quickly. On the drive over, he turned the radio all the way up and sang along at the top of his lungs.

Derek was waiting on the porch for him, just like he had been the first time Stiles had come over. It had been less than two weeks, but that day seemed like a lifetime ago.

He looked a little worse for wear- he had bags under his eyes and tears in his clothes- but he was smiling. Stiles wanted to write poems about that smile.

"Derek!" He was never going to get tired of saying his name. "What happened? Where did you go? How come I can talk?" He'd asked a dozen questions before he'd finished climbing the porch steps.

"You talk too much." Derek pulled him close and kissed him.

"I've been told that before." Stiles smirked, breaking away. "But if you think you can shut me up just by kissing me, you're dead wrong. I demand answers, mister."

They went inside, and had their first conversation without a notepad in over a week. Derek explained how he'd gone to the warehouse and used the witch's scent to track her back to her lair. Stiles pretended that this totally didn't creep him out at all.

Once he'd found the witch, Derek had been able to fight her using a talisman for protection. The charm had shielded him from most of her spells, but she had been difficult to fight even without her magic. Eventually, he'd gotten her Power Center from her and destroyed it.

"So, what happened to the witch after that?" Stiles asked. "Did she melt? I bet she melted."

"She didn't melt." Derek rolled his eyes. He'd hardly been able to get through his story without Stiles interrupting him every ten seconds. "But she was very weak. I doubt she'll be able to hurt so much as a fly from now on. She's harmless."

For some reason, Stiles was relieved. Even if she had cursed him and tried to kill his friends, he was glad that Derek hadn't killed the witch. If he had, that would have made him just as bad as she was.

There was still something that upset him, though. "Why did you go alone?" He asked. "Scott and the others could have helped you. What if you had gotten hurt?"

"The talisman could have only protected one person. Scott and everyone else would have still been vulnerable to her spells. I had the best chance of defeating her by myself." Derek explained. "Anything else?"

Stiles still had a million questions. Where had Derek gotten the talisman?

Why hadn't he told Stiles where he was going? Had the witch tried to turn him into a snake? "Why did you..." Stiles had a hard time meeting Derek's gaze. Suddenly, he felt very fidgety. "Why did you do it?"

Derek frowned. "For you, obviously." He said simply. "Losing your voice was killing you, Stiles. I hated seeing you like that. I care about you, and I want you to be happy. You should know that by now."

Stiles felt happier than he'd ever thought possible. But he still had one more question. "So... can we have sex now?"

They were upstairs in less than a minute.

Derek held Stiles' face and kissed him hard. He tasted like coffee, and it was heavenly. His hands were everywhere at once. In Stiles' hair, under his shirt, on his ass. One squeeze, and Stiles was completely undone.

"Derek..." He moaned. He loved the way that name felt on his lips.

"Bed. Now." Derek panted, already ripping off his jacket. Stiles happily obliged.

After a minute of struggling with buttons and belts, Stiles was flat on his back and wearing only his underwear. Derek planted kisses on Stiles' jaw, his neck, his chest, his stomach. He stopped above Stiles' crotch, his breath hot on Stiles' erection.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" Derek asked, concern mixing with the heat in his eyes. "We can take this slow, if you'd rather wait. There's no rush."

Stiles shook his head. "I want this." He said fiercely.

Derek nodded. "Just let me know if you want me to stop."

"God, and you say I talk too much."

Derek chuckled, his laugh raw and rough. And then his hands were on

Stiles, and time seemed to slow down and speed up all at once.

He peeled off Stiles' boxers, flinging them carelessly to the bedroom floor. Stiles' cock was hard and dripping. Derek knelt between Stiles' legs. He leaned forward and kissed the head, his stubble rough on the sensitive skin. Slowly, he licked up the shaft, then down again. Stiles made a strangled sound and clutched the sheets.

Derek's mouth was warm and wet as it took in Stiles' length. He sucked softly, making obscene noises that set Stiles on fire. "Derek... God, Derek!" Derek kept his hands on Stiles' hips, anchoring him with his touch. He lapped and sucked, until Stiles was on the brink of coming. Then, suddenly, he stopped.

"What are you doing?" Stiles slurred, his mind foggy with arousal.

"One second." Derek hissed. He grabbed a small jar and a condom from his bedside drawer, then wriggled out of his underwear. His penis jutted out from his body, pink and throbbing. He rolled the condom on, and Stiles had to bite his lip to keep from whimpering. The lust was surging in his veins. Finally, Derek opened the jar and smeared the lubricant onto his fingers. "This is going to feel kind of weird." He warned. Stiles spread his legs in response. If Derek didn't hurry up, he was going to explode from sexual frustration.

Derek pressed a slick finger into Stiles. His entrance was hot and tight. When he was knuckle deep, he curled his finger, and holy shit, Derek was inside him. It was exhilarating, and a little uncomfortable. The second and third fingers were more difficult, but when Derek brushed that sweet spot, Stiles practically melted into the mattress.

"Derek... Jesus, Derek, I'm ready." He panted.

Derek slid into him slowly, carefully, as if he were afraid Stiles might fall apart. Stiles was a little afraid he might fall apart, too. The sensation was intense, and his eyes stung with tears.

"It's okay." Derek whispered, in between kisses. "It's okay."

He began moving in short, shallow thrusts. His cock was straining inside of Stiles, and his chest was glistening with sweat. Stiles dug his nails into Derek's back. He was overwhelmed with pleasure and pain. When Derek grazed that sensitive spot again, Stiles cried out. "More. Faster. Harder. Please!" Derek sank into him, again and again, until the hurt was eclipsed by ecstasy.

"Say my name." Derek said huskily. "Say my name again, Stiles."

Stiles did. "Derek... Derek..." He was still moaning his name after he came.

They collapsed in a messy heap, the sheets sticky with sweat and semen. For a while, all they could do was breath and hold each other. Stiles rested his head on Derek's chest and wondered if he'd ever be able to walk again. Derek stroked Stiles' hair, threading his fingers through the strands absentmindedly.

There was still so much that Stiles wanted to say. It seemed like there was a well of words inside of him that would never run dry. He wanted to tell Derek how much these past few days had meant to him. He wanted to thank him for everything he'd done. But he also wanted to tell him little things, too. Random things, like how he loved *The Dark Knight* but hated *Batman Begins*, and how his mother had taught him card tricks when he was little.

There were so many words, but he decided they could wait until morning. He'd come to appreciate the silence, as long as he could share it with Derek. His voice wasn't going anywhere, and neither was he. For now, there was only one thing that he needed to say.

"I love you." He whispered. "But I am not changing these sheets."

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